

Build Multi-Use Trails Along The Natchez Trace Parkway



Photo: A new section of Multi-Use Trail that parallels the Natchez Trace Parkway near Ridgeland, Mississippi, a suburb of Jackson, Mississippi. Photo by Bob Felker.

Inset photo: Ashley Ragan, an NPS ranger working at the Parkway Information Cabin in Ridgeland, tries out a section of the new multi-use trail. Photo by Sandi Kavanaugh.

Mega-Project* Profile: Multi-Use Trails Along The Natchez Trace Parkway

Estimated cost: \$102 million
(three trail segments)

Percentage of (region's) FLTP
Annual Allotment
for Category II: 2,040%

Percentage of NPS FLTP
Annual Allotment
for Category II: 2,040%

The Natchez Trace. The Natchez Trace follows a scenic 444-mile route between Natchez, Mississippi, and Nashville, Tennessee. It traces the early pathways of the Natchez, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Indian tribes, French and Spanish explorers, and American settlers as they traversed the low hills between the Mississippi River and the valley of the Tennessee. For decades, the Old Trace was one of the most important roads in the nation, an avenue of exploration, warfare, trade, and settlement.

In the early 1930s, work began on a Congressionally mandated Parkway, using the labor of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. The Emergency Appropriations Act of June 19, 1934, allocated initial construction funds.

The Natchez Trace Parkway was established under the National Park Service in May, 1938, and the majority of construction was completed in 2005. In 2013, the Natchez Trace Parkway celebrates its 75th Anniversary.

Multi-Use Trails On The Natchez Trace.

The 106th Congress (1999-2001) directed the National Park Service to investigate the feasibility and cost to construct a multi-use trail along the Parkway. In June 2003, a Multi-Use

Trail Feasibility Study was prepared by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which examined the feasibility of constructing multi-use trails parallel to the Natchez Trace Parkway motor road.

The study recommended that three sections along the Parkway should have a parallel trail because of traffic volumes, accident data, and national recreational trends. Those sections recommended for multi-use trail segments are within or near the Mississippi cities of Tupelo, Jackson, and Natchez.

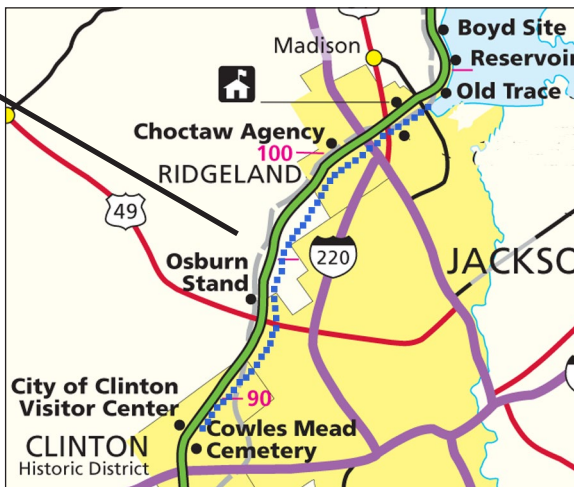
Natchez, Mississippi section: In the Natchez area, 9.4 miles of trail have been proposed for construction. Initial planning has the Natchez Section of the multi-use trail beginning at the Southern terminus of the Parkway at Liberty Road in Natchez, and continuing north to the Old Trace Exhibit at milepost 8.8. The environmental assessment (EA) has been completed, and the approximate cost for this section is \$27.5 million.

Tupelo section: The Tupelo section of the multi-use trail is planned to begin at the Black Belt Overlook at milepost 251.9 and continue north to MS Highway 363 near milepost 271. The cost estimate for this 22-mile section is approximately \$52.5 million. Environmental

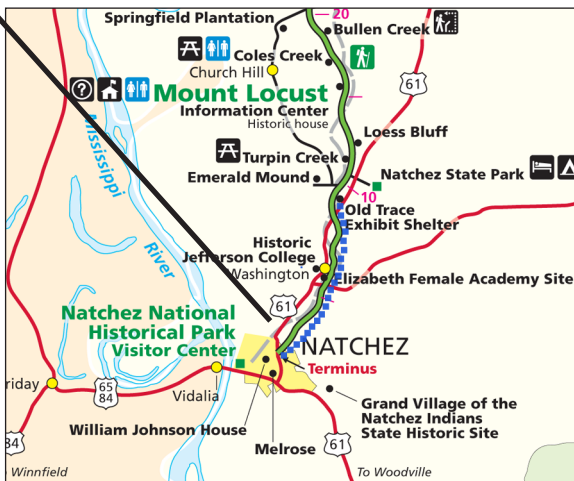
Tupelo, MS area: The Multi-Use Trail will extend between the Black Belt Overlook and the crossing of MS Hwy. 363 and the Natchez Trace Parkway, a distance of approximately 22 miles. (Blue dots indicate area of the Multi-Use Trail, but not necessarily the final alignment.)



Jackson, MS area: A group of NPS- and community-built Multi-Use Trail segments will eventually link four suburbs (Clinton, Ridgeland, Madison, and Jackson) over an 18-mile length. (Blue dots indicate area of the Multi-Use Trail, but not necessarily the final alignment.)



Natchez, MS area: Multi-Use Trail segments are planned between the southern terminus of the Natchez Trace Parkway and the Old Trace Exhibit Shelter, approximately 9.4 miles in length. (Blue dots indicate area of the Multi-Use Trail, but not necessarily the final alignment.)



*** Mega Projects:** The NPS transportation system is supported, in part, by funds from the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP). Currently, the NPS is authorized an annual budget of \$268 million from the FLTP. These funds are apportioned by formula among the seven NPS Regions. Most of these funds are used for "transportation asset management" – that is, to pay for the work required to keep existing assets in good condition. There are some projects, such as a major bridge repair or ship replacement, that require a much larger amount of funding than is available on an annual basis to a Region. These we call "Mega Projects." The NPS is pursuing strategies to fund these projects.

compliance has not yet begun for this section. Tupelo is the county seat of Lee County, and the largest city in northeast Mississippi. It is also home to the Natchez Trace Parkway Headquarters.

Jackson section: The multi-use trail passes through three metropolitan areas in the Jackson region; Madison, Ridgeland and Jackson, and upon completion to Pinehaven Drive will include a fourth metro area: Clinton. The trail is heavily used by hikers, runners, and

bicyclists, and contributes significantly to the Park Service's goal of connecting people to parks.

Approximately 10.8 miles of the trail in the Jackson area has been completed and 2.2 miles are in the design phase. Currently, the southern terminus of the trail ends in a field adjacent to the Parkway which has no appropriate parking facilities. The most immediate need is for approximately \$8 million in funding to construct an additional 2.2 miles of trail leading to the Osburn Stand parking area. This will provide an appropriate pause point for the Trail.

The remaining section of the trail to be constructed in the Jackson area extends from Osburn Stand to Pinehaven Drive. The estimate is approximately \$14 million for this additional 4.8 miles of Trail.

At Pinehaven Drive, the City of Clinton is developing a multi-use trail system for their city. The extension of the Natchez Trace multi-use trail to Pinehaven Drive would also connect the users of the trail to the Clinton Visitor's Center. Upon completion of this section, the total trail length of multi-use trail would be nearly 18 miles.

Approximately 3.1 miles of the multi-use trail was constructed by the City of Ridgeland. The amount of automobile traffic on the Parkway between mileposts 100 and 105 in the Ridgeland suburb ranges from moderate to heavy, so the multi-use trail was a welcome addition for non-motorized users of the Natchez Trace Parkway.

In addition to the community funds supporting the development of multi-use trail segments in Clinton and Ridgeland, funding for the remainder of these projects has come from the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP).